



# SCHOOL BUS, INC.

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## **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION "POINT OF CONTACT"** **FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER**

### **14<sup>TH</sup> NCST DOCUMENT AVAILABLE SOON**

The proceedings of the 14<sup>th</sup> National Congress on School Transportation (NCST) have been printed and will soon be available from the Missouri Safety Center at Central Missouri State University. As of February 1, 2006, the current National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures that were adopted last May can be ordered at [www.safetycenter.cmsu.edu](http://www.safetycenter.cmsu.edu). The price of the 450-page document is just \$35, which includes postage via standard US Mail.

### **Head Start Transportation Deadline Moves Again**

On December 30, President Bush signed the Appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services. The bill contains two provisions related to Head Start transportation service and the final regulations that were scheduled to take effect on January 18 of this year.

Under the first provision, the Secretary of HHS may waive the requirements that every Head Start or Early Head Start child be transported in an appropriate child restraint system and that all Head Start vehicles have one or more adult monitors in addition to the driver. In order to qualify for a waiver, an agency must demonstrate that compliance with the requirements would result in a "significant disruption" to the program and that waiving the requirements is in the best interest of the children involved. The waiver provision is good until September 30, 2006, unless the Head Start Reauthorization bill is enacted before then.

The second provision delays the deadline for all Head Start students to be transported in school buses or MFSABs until June 30, 2006, or 60 days after the enactment of the Reauthorization bill.

Congress reacted to complaints of Head Start agencies and their transporters, many of whom are transit agencies, that the requirements for school buses, monitors, and restraint systems are too costly and will result in fewer children being able to access the programs.

These delays will allow legislators to consider changes to the regulations in the Head Start Reauthorization Act, which they hope to finalize this year. Meantime, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) is conducting a study of the cost and operational issues related to the transportation regulations. NSTA is participating in the study.

### **We Get Questions . . .**

**Q.** I'm confused by the DOT registration forms; I'm not sure which classification I fit. Can you help me?

**A.** You're referring to the Motor Carrier Identification Report (MCS-150), which must be completed by any school bus company that takes passengers to destinations across state lines, including for school activity trips. You need to fill out this form in order to obtain a DOT registration number, and you also need to submit biannual updates, whether or not your information has changed. It can be very confusing for school bus operators to pick the right classifications, since it depends on what kind of work you are doing, and some choices are misleading. Let's go through the possibilities:

The first choice you need to make is in question 21, Company Operation. The confusing choice here is "Intrastate non-hazmat carrier," since most school transportation is intrastate and does not involve hazardous materials (at least as defined by DOT). But your intrastate operations are not subject to DOT authority, so this is not the right category for you. You should circle "Interstate carrier."

The next choices are in question 23, Operation Classification. The correct option for school activity trips is "Exempt For Hire," which indicates that you are a contractor (for hire) and that you are providing interstate transportation that does not come under the economic authority of FMCSA (transportation of students and school personnel that begins and ends at a school). The correct option for charter service for adults or other non-school charter trips (e.g. summer camp) is "Authorized For Hire." If you do interstate charter trips in addition to school activity trips, you should circle both options.

The only time one of the "Private Passenger" choices would apply is when you are transporting your own employees exclusively.

**Be aware that if you circle "Authorized for Hire," you will need to apply for operating authority as well (an MC number). If you circle only "Exempt for Hire," you don't need an MC number.**

### **Maintenance Workshops Scheduled for 2006!**

This is an excellent opportunity for your maintenance technicians and other staff to become experts on how a school bus operates and learn how to troubleshoot mechanical issues with ease. Workshops will be held at the following locations and dates:

#### **Blue Bird Corporation --**

##### **Fort Valley, GA**

February 28 - March 1, 2006

July 18 - 19, 2006

September 9 - 10, 2006

#### **International Truck & Engine Corporation --**

##### **Tulsa, OK**

March 6 - 9, 2006

June 26 - 29, 2006

September 25 - 28, 2006

#### **Thomas Built Buses—**

##### **High Point, NC**

March 14 - 15, 2006

October 24 - 25, 2006

Registration forms will be available in mid-January. Contact your dealer if you are interested in attending any of these classes.

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